

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT ABU DHABI 1666 ACTION SECSTATE AND TEHRAN
INFO DOHA, JIDDA, KUWAIT, MANAMA, AND MUSCAT DATED JUNE 11, 1978.

QUOTE: S E C R E T ABU DHABI 1666

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TC, IR

SUBJ: POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE UAE

REFS: (A) TEHRAN 5512, (B) STATE 141246

1. WE FIND ATTITUDE OF IRANIAN MFA OFFICIAL REPORTED REF A
PUZZLING AND REFLECTING WOEFUL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF UAE SCENE.
OBVIOUSLY IF USG WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICAL AND
SECURITY SITUATION IN UAE, DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT HAVE INSTRUCTED
EMBASSY TEHRAN TO APPROACH GOI AS IT DID NOR WOULD IT HAVE AUTHORIZED
US TO MAKE POINTS CONTAINED REF B TO SHAIKH ZAYID, SHAIKH RASHID,
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AND OTHER RULERS. THIS WE ARE NOW DOING. WE HOPE AT SAME TIME
THAT OTHER GULF FRIENDS OF UAE, NOTABLY IRANIANS AND SAUDIS, WILL
BE DOING THE SAME.

2. WE WOULD REMARK THAT VIEWS EXPRESSED BY SHAH AS WELL AS BY MFA
INTERLOCTOR REFLECT VERY MUCH THOSE HELD BY SHAIKH RASHID AND
THOSE AROUND HIM IN DUBAI. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING GIVEN LONG

AND RELATIVELY CLOSE DUBAI ASSOCIATION WITH IRAN AND IRANIAN
BACKGROUND MANY OF DUBAI'S LEADING MERCHANT FAMILIES. THERE IS,

AS WE OURSELVES HAVE HEARD, TENDENCY IN DUBAI TO EXPLAIN AWAY
PROBLEMS TROUBLING UAE WITH EXPLANATION THEY ARE ALL DUE TO
INFLUENCE ON ZAYID OF VARIOUS FOREIGN ADVISERS AND MOST
ESPECIALLY TO THAT OF AHMAD KHALIFAH SUWAIDI WHO HELD FORTH AS "EVIL
GENIUS" MANIPULATING ZAYID. IN PRECISELY SAME WAY ABU DHABIANS
HAVE REFERRED TO MAHDI TAJIR AS BEING TROUBLE-MAKER ON DUBAI SIDE.
WE UNAWARE OF REASONS WHICH SHAH MAY HAVE FOR SUSPECTING SUWAIDI
OF COLLUSION WITH IRAQIS (TO WHAT END?) BUT HAVE A FEELING THESE
SUSPICIONS MAY BE BASED AS MUCH IF NOT MORE ON IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC
AND INTELLIGENCE REPORTS REFLECTING DUBAIS PREJUDICES AGAINST
SUWAIDI THAN ON HARD EVIDENCE OF SUCH COLLUSION.

3. IT SEEMS TO US THAT IMPORATNT POINT IS NOT WHETHER USG OR
IRAN OR SAUDI ARABIA OR EVEN UK IS "RESPONSIBLE" FOR WHAT GOES
ON IN LOWER GULF. POINT IS THAT ALL OF US HAVE CLEAR INTEREST

IN SEEING UNITY OF UAE PRESERVED AND THIS UNIQUE ARABIAN EXPERIMENT
IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUCCEED. THIS GOAL WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED OR
EVEN ADVANCED BY UAE'S FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS STAKING OUT PARTISAN
POSITIONS ON BEHALF OF THIS OR THAT EMIRATE BUT BY MAKING CLEAR TO
ALL RULERS WITHIN UAE THAT (A) WE SUPPORT CONTINUED FEDERAL UNITY
OF ALL SEVEN EMIRATES, AND (B) WE WOULD NOT SUPPORT OR RECOGNIZE
UNILATERAL SECESSION OF ONE OR MORE EMIRATES FROM FEDERATION. (LAST
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POINT GOES AS MUCH FOR ABU DHABI, WHERE THERE ARE ALSO SOME
PAROCHIAL SECESSIONIST TENDENCIES, AS FOR DUBAI.)

4. POINT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE THAT WITHIN THESE ABOVE PARAMETERS
UAE'S FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS HAVE NO WISH TO INTERFERE IN WHAT
ARE OBVIOUSLY DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL
QUESTIONS. RULERS AND PEOPLE OF THE EMIRATES MUST ULTIMATELY
WORK THESE OUT FOR THEMSELVES IN MANNER THAT BEST MEETS THEIR
TRADITIONS, CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE.
WE DO NOT SUGGEST THAT EITHER OR BOTH SIDES HAVE ALWAYS ACTED WISELY
OR DISINTERESTEDLY IN THE COURSE OF THIS DISPUTE. HOWEVER, WE
BELIEVE
IT WOULD BE GROSS OVER-SIMPLIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM TO SEE
DISPUTE AS ONE BETWEEN HEROES AND VILLIANS OR TO ASSUME THAT THESE
ISSUES HAVE ARISEN MERELY BECAUSE OF "BAD ADVICE" OR THE BANEFUL
INFLUENCE OF "CUNNING ADVISERS."

5. AS AMERICANS SHOULD KNOW WELL FROM THEIR OWN HISTORY,
FEDERALISM IS NOT AN EASY FORM OF GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE GENUINE
ISSUES HERE THAT GO TO THE HEART OF WHAT THE FEDERAL SYSTEM OF
GOVERNMENT IN THE EMIRATES SHOULD BE. HOW LEGITIMATE NEEDS
FOR SOME DEGREE OF CENTRAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTROL WILL BE BALANCED

AGAINST EQUALLY LEGITIMATE (AND STRONGLY HELD) CONCERNS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SOME DEGREE OF LOCAL AUTONOMY AND CONTROL OVER POLICIES AND ACTIONS THAT AFFECT THE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS OF THE UAE'S INHABITANTS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY WHAT THIS INTERNAL DISPUTE IS ALL ABOUT. THERE ARE NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO SUCH ISSUES(WE ARE STILL FINE-TINKERING WITH OUR OWN FEDERAL SYSTEM) AND THERE MAY NOT BE ALL THAT MUCH THAT OUTSIDERS CAN APPRECIABLY DO AT THIS POINT TO GUIDE OR CONTROL THE EVOLUTION OF THE UAE FEDERAL EXPERIMENT, EXCEPT TO STAND READY TO OFFER SYMPATHY AND TACTFUL ADVICE TO ALL UAE PARTIES SHOULD THEY APPEAR WILLING TO ACCEPT THAT.

6. IN PARA 3 OF REF A, TEHRAN'S MFA CONTACT TOUCHES ON A VERY VALID CONCERN, NAMELY THE LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE EMIRATES AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ARMED FORCES AND EVEN THE POLICE FORCES
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ARE RECRUITED FROM AMONG NON-EMIRIANS. THIS IS A MATTER OF CONCERN TO UAE LEADERS THEMSELVES. GIVEN THE SMALL SIZE OF THE UAE POPULATION AND THE DISINCLINATION OF MANY OF ITS NOUVEAUX RICHES NATIVE INHABITANTS TO TAKE UP UNPLEASANT OR FINANCIALLY UNREWARDING OCCUPATIONS LIKE THOSE OF SOLDIER OR POLICEMAN, MUCH LESS CONSTRUCTION WORKERS AND DRILLER, WE SEE NO EARLY SOLUTION TO THIS PROBLEM SHORT OF A DRASTIC TURNDOWN IN THE FEDERATION'S ECONOMY. ONE ANSWER, WHICH HAS BEEN URGED ON THE UAE SINCE THE INITIAL MILITARY REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS WERE SUBMITTED BY TRIPARTITE SAUDI/KUWAITI/JORDANIAN SURVEY TEAM IN 1975, WOULD BE TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE ARMED FORCES FROM THEIR PRESENT STRENGTH OF OVER 40,000 TO A MORE COMPACT, WELL-TRAINED, AND HIGHLY MOBILE ARMY IN WHICH THE PERCENTAGE OF NATIONALS, AT LEAST IN THE OFFICER CORPS, COULD BE HIGHER THAN IT IS AT PRESENT AND THE NEED FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN ADVISERS, TECHNICIANS, ETC., CORRESPONDINGLY REDUCED. THIS WOULD BE USEFUL ADVICE FOR THIS SMALL COUNTRY'S FRIENDS TO URGE UPON THE UAE LEADERSHIP (ESPECIALLY IN ABU DHABI) BUT IT WOULD NEED TO BE DONE VERY, VERY CAREFULLY SO AS NOT TO AROUSE UAE SUSPICIONS THAT THOSE TENDERING SUCH ADVICE HAVE AS AN ULTERIOR MOTIVE THE WEAKENING THE UAE'S ABILITY TO DEFEND ITS INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY FROM ENCROACHMENT BY STRONGER NEIGHBORS. FACT THAT SIZE OF FORCES IN ABU DHABI HAS BEEN ONE OF ISSUES RAISED BY RASHID IS FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR.

7. THIS LEADS TO THE QUESTION, ALSO RAISED BY THE IRANIAN MFA OFFICIAL, ABOUT WHAT MORE THE USG COULD OR SHOULD DO TO ASSURE THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE LOWER GULF STATES. THIS IS A LEGITIMATE QUESTION BUT ONE WHICH THE US CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO ANSWER IN ISOLATION. WE HERE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT A PROGRAM OR MAJOR ARMS SALES, FOR EXAMPLE, IS THE PRESCRIPTION ALTHOUGH EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF UAE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP THROUGH TRAINING IN US AND OTHER FRIENDLY MILITARY SCHOOLS MIGHT BE A STEP
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TOWARD SOLVING SOME OF THE PROBLEMS NOTED IN PARA 5 ABOVE.
WE HEARTILY AGREE WITH EMBASSY TEHRAN'S RECOMMENDATION THIS IS
MATTER WHICH MERITS FURTHER STUDY IN WASHINGTON AND OTHER INTERESTED
CAPITALS. CONVERSTATIONS REPORTED REF A CONSTITUTE USEFUL FIRST
STEP TOWARD CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH IRANIANS ON THESE AREAS
OF CONCERN. WE LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER SUCH EXCHANGES, NOT ONLY
IN TEHRAN BUT IN OTHER CONCERNED CAPITALS ADDRESSED BY REF B.

8. FOR TEHRAN: RE LAST SENTENCE PARA 4 URTEL, TEHRAN ADDRESSEE
NOT ONLY OF ALL ABU DHABI CABLES ON THIS SUBJECT BUT ALSO
OF NUMEROUS MEMCONS AND AN AIRGRAM POUCHED JUNE 7.
THESE MAY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WHICH TO ENGAGE IRANIANS
IN FURTHER DISCUSSION RE UAE SITUATION.

9. FOR DEPARTMENT: UNLESS DEPARTMENT OR TEHRAN DISAGREE, PROPOSE
THAT THIS CABLE AS WELL AS REF A BE PASSED EMBASSY LONDON
DICKMASG

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